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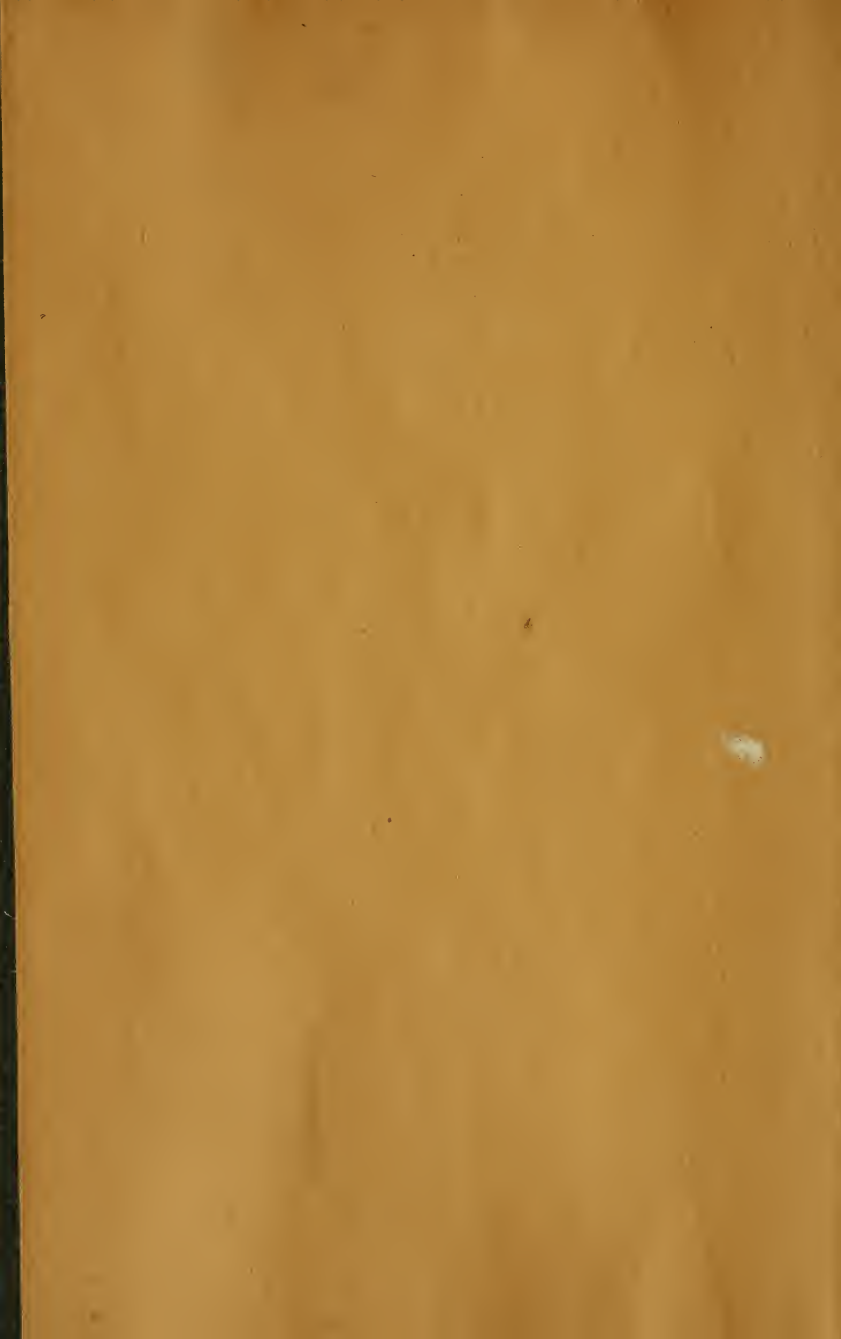
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BRIEF NOTICE

OF

WILLIAM SHURTLEFF,

OF

MARSHFIELD.

BY

NATHANIEL BRADSTREET SHURTLEFF.

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"Veterum non immemor parentum."

Dr. B. Schottlaff M. D.

VIA RAIL ROAD

TO


NEW YORK

## THE WRITER TO HIS KINSFOLK.

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THE principal object in preparing and printing this tract is to preserve, and keep together, certain facts relating to our common American Progenitor.

William Shurtleff, who was killed in 1666, was the ancestor of all who bear the name in New England, and perhaps of all others of the name in this country:—And, as the writer wishes to preserve all that relates to him and his descendants, and is making collections for that purpose, he will be pleased to accept from each of the family what is known concerning the different branches.



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NOTICE OF WILLIAM SHURTLEFF,  
OF MARSHFIELD.

AMONG the adventurous few who came to New England, during the first fifteen years of the existence of the Colony of New Plymouth, was William Shurtleff; and so young was he when he was indentured as an apprentice, in 1634, that he was to serve eleven years, as is made apparent by the following entry, preserved on the seventieth page of the first volume of the Plymouth Court Orders:—

“September } William Shetle hath put himselfe  
2. 1634 } an apprentice to Thomas Clarke  
for the terme of eleuen yeares from the 16 of May  
last and at the end of the sayd terme the sayd  
Thomas is to cloth him with two sutes fit for  
such a seruant and also eyght Bushells of Indian  
Corne.”

In olden times the word "servant" had a very different signification from its present acceptation. Then, it was generally applied to an apprentice, and to any person who was in the employ of others; or, in the words of an old lexicographer, "one who serves another." Now, it is used to denote an individual whose occupation is menial in its nature; or, according to modern authority, to "one in subjection, a menial," &c.

The Thomas Clarke, to whom young Shurtleff was apprenticed, was by trade a carpenter. He came to Plymouth in the *Ann*, in the summer of 1623, where he dwelt until his decease in 1697. His grave-stone, one of the oldest on Plymouth burying hill, marks his earthly resting-place. Without any apparent evidence, he has been confounded by many with the mate, or rather pilot, of the renowned *May Flower*. He was father of several children, among whom was the famous Nathaniel Clarke, the successor to Secretary Morton, and a Councillor under the notorious Andros; and Susanna, the first wife of the Hon. Barnabas Lothrop, of Barnstable, an Assistant to the Plymouth Colony previous to its

union with Massachusetts, and afterwards a member of the Council of the Province of Massachusetts Bay.

The above is the earliest that can be found of Mr. Shurtleff, and nothing is known with certainty concerning his parentage, nor the time of his arrival in this country, nor of the causes or inducements which led him, at such a tender age, to leave his native land.

If it can be inferred from circumstances, he came from Yorkshire, in England; for in the West Riding of that County, and in a portion of it called Hallamshire, is situated the village of Ecclesfield, about five miles due north of the famous town of Sheffield, and about twenty from Scrooby, lately shown by Mr. Hunter to be the early gathering place of the Puritans before they left England for Holland. In this village, at a seat called Whitley-hall, once resided the only family, of which we have any knowledge, who bore the name previous to the appearance of William Shurtleff, or any other person of the name, in America. Therefore it is not unreasonable to suppose that he, living so near the nestling-place of the Leyden Pilgrims,

and being of an enthusiastic age, became fired by the spirit of adventure or inspired with the holy zeal of the Puritans; and thus became one of the first settlers of the town of Plymouth, and one of the forefathers of New England.

This name, like almost all others of ancient date, was variously spelled. First it appears as Chiercliffe, then Chyrecliffe, Shiercliffe, and afterwards Shurtleff. The vowels, *e*, *i*, *u*, and *y*, were very promiscuously used in both syllables, according to individual caprice or fashion. In New England, although the orthography is exceedingly various in old records, the name being scarcely spelt twice in the same manner, owing to writers spelling it according to the sound received by each, the first comer wrote it Shurtlef, as did also his children. What induced his grandson to double the final letter, and write his name Shurtleff, cannot now be ascertained, but must be attributed to the fashion of the time in which he lived. Be this as it may, the change has been considered so proper, that it has been almost universally adopted by the family, and continued in use to the present time.

In 1643 Mr. Shurtleff was certainly an inhabitant of Plymouth, where he was enrolled as being of the required age to perform military service for the Colony. Undoubtedly, he remained there during the whole term of his apprenticeship, which terminated in May, 1645. How much longer he dwelt in Plymouth has not been accurately ascertained, although it is known that he was an inhabitant of that town as late as September, 1659.

The same "Will<sup>m</sup> Shertcliffe for breaking the peace vpon John Smyth is fyned v<sup>s</sup>" on the fifth of June, 1644; and on the second of October, 1650, the authorities "present James Cole of the towne of Plymouth for making of a batterie vppon Willam Shirtley of the aforesaid towne." Such items are not uncommon in the old records.

In 1646 his name appears in a list of names comprising the Townsmen of Plymouth.

At the General Court of the Colony, held at Plymouth on the third of June, 1656, he first appears in public life, being chosen one of "the Surveyors for the highwaies," for the town of Plymouth. In recording this event his name is written "Willam Shirtley."

“Willam Shirtley” is found serving as Juryman on the sixth of October, 1657, in a controversy between two residents of Plymouth.

On the seventh of June, 1659, “Willam Shurtley” was chosen Constable for Plymouth, and on the same day, as “Willam Shirtley,” he was first on a list of names of “such as stand propounded to take vp their freedom.”

The following entry is made in the Colonial Court Orders, under date of the first of May, 1660; probably it is the last during his connection with Plymouth, of which he was then Constable:—

“Willam Shurtlife	}	were admitted freemen
and John Caruer		att this Court.”

He probably removed to Marshfield about this time, as his name cannot be found any later in any of the records of the Town of Plymouth. Nor can it be ascertained that he ever became a member of the Church at Plymouth, although it is known that he was a member of some Church according to statute requisition. Unfortunately the Church Records of Marshfield are not in a condition to show whether he was in church-fellowship in that town.

His name is not on any list of freemen which has been preserved among the Plymouth Colonial Records, owing to the fact that none of them were taken during the time which elapsed between his admission and death. Nevertheless, on a list of the freemen of the town of Marshfield, taken for town purposes in 1664, and preserved in the records of that town, his name occurs with thirty one others.

While in Plymouth his estate was at Strawberry hill near the Reed Pond, and not far from the present bounds of Kingston.

In Marshfield he resided in the eastern part of the town, in the neighborhood of what is now called White's Ferry, near the mouth of North River. He was in possession of this estate at the time of his decease, having bought it a short time previous of Mr. Thomas Tilden. The deed, which was dated on the sixth of July, 1670, four years after his decease, states that thirty three pounds sterling had been formerly paid for the same by "William Shirtleiffe," of Marshfield, then deceased. The "house and lands" had formerly belonged to Mr. Robert Waterman, and had been bought by



him of the administrator on the estate of Mr. Thomas Howell, deceased.

Besides his land at Strawberry hill and Marshfield, he had several grants from the Court of Assistants. On the third of June, 1662, he and twenty three others had an allotment of land in the following words:—"It was further graunted by this court that the abouesaid servants and ancient freemen shall haue libertie in case they can not procure Saconett necke" [now Little Compton] "according to the graunt To looke out some other place vndisposed of for their accomodation."

At the Court held on the fifth of June, 1666, less than three weeks before his decease, he had another grant of land in the following words:—"The court haue graunted that Willam Shirtliffe shalbee accomodated with land amongst the servants neare vnto the Bay line."

He also had land at "Punckateesett," now called Tiverton; and after his decease his heirs received in his right a conveyance of land at Saconet from the Indians.

From an instrument recorded with the Old Colony deeds it is ascertained that he sold meadow



land in Plymouth to Gabriel Fallowell on the twenty seventh of March, 1660, at which time he was called of Marshfield. Perhaps he was then preparing to change his place of residence, or had actually done so since the fifteenth of the previous September, when he certainly was a townsman and office-holder in Plymouth.

His dwelling-house in Marshfield was destroyed by fire early in the year 1666, and on this account he was sojourning at the house of his near neighbor, Mr. John Phillips, at the time of the occurrence of the lightning which caused his death.

From the several accounts of his death that have been preserved, together with facts which have been transmitted from generation to generation in the family, and other data obtained from authentic sources, the following particulars regarding this event have been deduced.

While he was partaking of the hospitality of Mr. Phillips, it appears that one of those dreadful droughts occurred, which were so very distressing to our early planters, and threatened to destroy all the fruits of their spring labor. On account of this the good people of several neighboring

congregations observed a day of fasting and prayer, as they were wont to do, in those days, when suffering under afflictive dispensations.

Soon after this, on the twenty third of June, 1666, happened the terrific thunder-storm which is so graphically described in the letter of Rev. Mr. Arnold. At the time of this storm there were fourteen persons in the common sitting-room of the house of Mr. Phillips. Perhaps they were the following:—Mr. John Phillips and his wife Grace; Jeremiah Phillips, a young man of about twenty years of age, son of Mr. Phillips; four other young children of Mr. Phillips; Grace and Hannah Holloway, the two children of Mrs. Phillips by her former husband; Mr. William Shurtleff and his wife Elizabeth, and their sons William and Thomas; and, finally, Mr. Timothy Rogers, the individual who related the circumstances to Mr. Arnold, the writer of the letter which has been the means of preserving many of the particulars of this sad event. These persons were mostly seated around the room. Mr. Shurtleff was sitting beside his wife, holding her hand in his, and having one of their children in his arms, the other being

between him and a table under which was a dog. The storm of rain coming on with great violence, Mrs. Phillips requested to have the door closed. Whereupon a stroke of lightning passed down the chimney, which it rent to pieces, smote down most of the persons, if not all, instantly killing Mr. Shurtleff, Mrs. Phillips and Jeremiah Phillips, and then passed out through the door, splitting it into fragments. This occurred on Saturday; and they were buried on the following day, being the twenty fourth, according to an entry made in the Marshfield town records.

It is shown in the Plymouth Colony Records that "Willam Shirtley married vnto Elizabeth Lettice the 18<sup>th</sup> of October 1655." She was a daughter of Thomas and Anne Lettice of Plymouth, who were in New England as early as 1638, if not in 1635. They had three sons, William, Thomas and Abiel.

William, the oldest son and "heir apparent," as he is styled in a recorded document, was born at Plymouth in 1657. He married Susanna, daughter of Hon. Barnabas Lothrop of Barnstable, in October, 1683, and died on the fourth of Feb-

ruary, 1729-30, in the seventy second year of his age. He was a Selectman of Plymouth for some years, Captain of the train-band, a Delegate to the Provincial Assembly in 1694, and Town Treasurer from 1695 to 1704, inclusive. 'When the town of Plympton was set off from Plymouth and incorporated he became an inhabitant of the new town; and at the first election for town officers, which took place on the first day of March, 1707-8, he was chosen Clerk. This office he held three years, and the earliest records of that town, written by him, are now preserved and are in excellent order. His wife, a granddaughter of Rev. John Lothrop and of the Thomas Clarke already mentioned, bare him eight sons and five daughters, among whom was Rev. William Shurtleff late of Newcastle and Portsmouth, N. H. She died at Plympton on the ninth of August, 1726, in the sixty third year of her age, having been born at Barnstable on the twenty eighth of February, 1664-5.

Thomas, the second son, is supposed to have been the person who married Sarah Kimball at Plympton on the twenty first of May, 1713. No evidence of the time of his decease or of his hav-

ing had any issue has been found, although very diligent search has been made.

Abiel, the third and youngest son, was born at Marshfield in June, 1666, a very short time after the decease of his father. At his birth there was a considerable debate about his name. By some it was thought that he should be called after Boanerges, (Children of Thunder,) as mentioned in the New Testament; but the difficulty of converting the plural name to the singular number fortunately prevailed against the infliction of an appellation which was far from being euphonious. The scriptural name Abiel, which, interpreted into English from the Hebrew, signifies "God my father," being sufficiently indicative of his posthumous birth, was adopted as the most satisfactory. He dwelt in Plymouth, where he married, on the fourteenth of January, 1695-6, Lydia Barnes, daughter of Jonathan and Elizabeth, and was the father of seven sons and three daughters. He was a Selectman of Plymouth, and held other offices in that town. Like his brothers, William and Thomas, he spent the last years of his life in Plympton. There he died on the twenty eighth of October, 1732, in

the sixty seventh year of his age. Lydia, his wife, died on the tenth of September, 1727, in the fifty third year of her age, she having been born at Plymouth on the fourth of July, 1674.

A few years after the death of the first William Shurtleff, Elizabeth, his widow, married on the eighteenth of November, 1669, Mr. Jacob Cooke, son of the Mr. Francis Cooke who came in the May Flower, and of his wife Esther, or Hester as the name is usually written. Mr. Jacob Cooke was a widower at the time of his marriage with Mrs. Shurtleff, his first wife having been Damaris, a daughter of Mr. Stephen Hopkins, also a passenger of the May Flower. Mr. Jacob Cooke died in 1676; and on the first day of January, 1688-9, his widow married, for her third husband, Mr. Hugh Cole, of Swansey, formerly of Plymouth, she being his second wife, his first having been Mary Foxwell. Mrs Cole died a few years afterwards, and Mr. Cole married a third wife.

The descendants of Mr. Shurtleff lived during the first three generations mostly in what now comprises Plymouth County, chiefly in Plymouth and the part of Plympton which now forms Carver.

A little more than a century ago, one parish of the town of Plympton contained more legal voters of the name of Shurtleff than can now be found within the limits of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and, perhaps, in the United States.

Branches of the family can be found permanently settled in various parts of Massachusetts, and in a few other States of the Union.

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